

**THE STOIC**  
A monologue  
By JANE CAFARELLA

*While lunching with a friend, BEA, 60+ answers a call from her daughter — but not in the way that's expected.*

Oh hello, darling! How are you?

*Beat*

That's great.

*Beat*

Oh, really? No not so great then. Oh dear.

*Beat*

Well, um, Monday's not really good for me. I've got art class.

*Beat*

Tuesday? Hmm...Philosophy. Sorry.

*Beat.*

Wednesday and Thursday? I'll be away on that writing retreat I was telling you about.

*Beat*

The weekend? Your father and I have booked a little place down the coast.

*Beat.*

Have you thought about a local babysitter?

*Beat.*

I suppose I could skip art.

*Beat.*

Okay. Bye. Let me know how you go.

*Sighs*

Bloody hell!

I feel so selfish!

I love my kids. I love my grandkids.

*Guiltily*

But I *don't* love looking after them.

There! I've said it.

Everyone assumes you're just dying to take care of them.

I'm dying to *visit* them, but after that I'm dying to live the life I couldn't when I was raising kids of my own!

It's tough, I know. Child care is so expensive. We try to help when we can.  
But... most of the time... *She hesitates, embarrassed...* It sounds dreadful, I know...

*Whispers*

I don't want to!

*Exasperated*

Been there! Done that!

I don't want to do it again. I don't want to feel... obligated.

Especially, as I'm always in the wrong.

*Mimicking her daughter*

"Mom, don't say that to him! Mom, don't feed her that! Mom, don't give them that!"

There are so many rules! New rules.

*Cheerfully*

I don't know about you, but I'm so glad that I've studied stoicism, which is all about self-control in the face of negative emotions.

The chief aim is to understand what you have control over and what you don't. Like death.

As Seneca said, "You may not wake up tomorrow."

Of course, it would be a terrible shame not see my grandchildren grow up. But at the same time, it reminds you to live your life to the fullest, doesn't it? Not to waste a second.

*Her mobile phone rings.*

Hello darling.

*Beat.*

*A slight hesitation, followed by resolve*

Look, I'm really sorry but I've just checked and I've got that specialist appointment on Monday, as well as art. I've waited three months. I can't change it.

*Beat*

Yes, someone local would be good. Just for back up.

*Beat*

Good luck! Love you!

*She sighs, then smiles*

Like Seneca, I love to journal. My favourite time is the evenings.

Like Seneca I "examine my day and go back over what I've said and done, hiding nothing from myself".

And I'm always glad when I've encouraged my children to understand what they have control over — and what they don't.

**392 spoken words**

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